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Appropriations Committee – Budget Hearings RE: Legislative Agencies  
February 19, 2013

*H.B. No. 6350: Testimony AGAINST merger of Permanent Commission on the Status of Women*  
Jennifer Smith, Legislative Director, District 1199/SEIU Healthcare

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As a union of predominantly-women healthcare workers, District 1199/SEIU Healthcare recommends against the proposed merger/elimination of the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW) in H.B. No. 6350, An Act Concerned the Budget for the Biennium Ending June 30, 2015, and Other Provisions Relating to Revenue.

While we may all want to tell ourselves that gender discrimination is a thing of Connecticut's past, today's facts clearly show the ongoing need for the PCSW:

- ↓ CT women today are paid only .76¢ for every \$1.00 CT men receive.
- ↓ CT women disproportionately go without any health insurance or are forced rely on Medicaid and Medicare because coverage from their employer is either not provided or is not affordable.
- ↓ CT women make up less than 30% of the 2013-2014 General Assembly.

PCSW is the only public entity that actively researches, advocates, and monitors Connecticut's policies and practices to ensure they are non-discriminatory to women and advance the status of women — whether in government, education, the workplace, and in terms of access to healthcare.

Of our 26,000 union healthcare workers in Connecticut, over 72% are women. Our caregiving jobs have always been relegated as “women’s work” and devalued by paying substandard wages and benefits compared to traditional-yet-comparable “men’s” jobs. Over the past 40+ years, we’ve fought to raise standards and equity for women in the healthcare field — and PCSW has been a critical force in that struggle.

Our economy and our healthcare system are in the middle of great transition, which makes the PCSW as important as ever:

- 1.) *Economic Disparity & Gender Discrimination* — in the effort to reduce state’s healthcare costs, women need the PCSW to help ensure pressures for ‘savings’ are not pushed onto backs of women direct care workers.
- 2.) *Health Care Disparity* — as Connecticut and the nation implement the Affordable Care Act, women need the PCSW to help ensure insurance plans are affordable, comprehensive, and include access to women’s health services.
- 3.) *Leadership Development* — with women holding a *minority* of local, state, or national offices, where major decisions affecting women get made, we need the PCSW to help recruit and encourage women of all political perspectives to run.

We urge the Appropriations Committee to maintain the PCSW in the 2014-2015 budget as an individual, independent force for Connecticut’s women.